

Surplus Success . . .

Historic Heber Valley Railroad

The Heber Creeper was forced to discontinue operation after nearly 20 years of taking Utah residents, as well as visitors to the State, up the mountainside to view Utah from an 1800's perspective. The rail station sat empty for several years. There was even talk of tearing up the tracks. However, in 1992, a petition was presented to the State Legislature to re-open the historic railroad.

Heber Valley Historic Railroad Executive Director, Craig Lacey, explained that the Union Pacific Railroad had donated a steam engine to the State of Utah for display at the State Fairgrounds. The conditions of the donation prohibited the sale or disassembly of the engine for any reason.

"When some of the local people got together to petition the State Legislature [their position was] 'the State already owns this engine, it already owns the railroad line, why can't this be run as a State agency?'. The [Legislature] went along with it, made us eligible for surplus and we became the Heber Valley Historic Railroad Authority, operating as a State Agency," Lacey said. "We've been struggling along since 1992, and to be honest with you, I don't think we would have been able to do it without being under the umbrella of the State and the Surplus Program. The Surplus Program built our shop."

In the surplus built shop, the railroad personnel have been able to restore two steam engines and a diesel engine, purchased through surplus, as well as refurbish several old passenger cars and transformed an old army flat car



Heber Valley Railroad Executive Director, Craig Lacey, shows of antique train engine that is maintained with equipment purchase through the State & Federal Surplus Property Program.

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-Craig Lacey

into an open-air passenger car.

"The appropriations went into affect July 1, 1992. Mother's Day Weekend 1993 we were running trains. It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible to get things going without the Surplus Program," he said. "We just wouldn't be here without Surplus, at least not at the point we are now."

During the past eight years, the railroad has grown a little each year. Surplus items have enabled their personnel to

build equipment for fire fighting, a shop with heating, vehicles that can run on pavement as well as rail and a wheelchair lift. The railroad is currently building a new depot, which should be completed sometime in the spring of 2001.

For more information on the Heber Valley Historic Railroad and on both summer and winter trip schedules visit them at www.hebervalleyrr.org.